

Kamoi Theater
Southeast corner of Ala
Malama Avenue and Kamoi Street
Kaunakakai, Molokai
Maui County
Hawaii

HABS No. HI-57

HABS
HI,
5-KAUKA,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service, Western Region
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California 94102

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
KAMOI THEATER

HABS No. HI-57

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HI,
5-KAUKA,
1-

Location: Southeast corner of Ala Malama Avenue and
Kamoi Street (fronting Ala Malama Avenue)
Kaunakakai, Molokai
Maui County
Hawaii

Kaunakakai Quadrangle (7.5')
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
04.705420.2333800

Present Owner: George and Janet King (husband and wife)
c/o Mr. Constantine G. Tsacomas, Treasurer
Security Construction, Inc.
114 Manor Drive
Piedmont, CA 94611

Use: Vacant. Former movie theater which will be
demolished.

Significance: The Kamoi Theater is one of three buildings
on the island of Molokai that were built
expressly as movie theaters. Only the
Kamoi, in the town of Kaunakakai, remains;
the others, in the towns of Maunaloa and
Kualapuu, have been demolished. Of vernac-
ular design, the building is distinctive in
its inventive use of space and practical
solutions to functional problems. From its
completion in 1939 to its closure in 1979,
the Kamoi served a significant and multi-
faceted role in the cultural and social life
of Molokai.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: According to an April 8, 1939 article in the Maui News the construction of the Kamoi Theater began on March 15, 1939 with an expected opening date of May 1, 1939.¹ A subsequent Maui News article of August 5, 1939 indicated that the Kamoi Theater opened with free movies and entertainment on July 25, 1939.²

2. Architect: No architect is known to have been involved with the building's design.

3. Original and subsequent owners: The Kamoi Theater was originally constructed and owned by James Muranaka of Kaunakakai.³ Although he owned a thirty year lease on the building, the land, however, was owned by Molokai Ranch, Limited. In 1945, Robert Kwano and Hatsuichi Okada, both of Kaunakakai, purchased the remainder of the original thirty-year lease from Mr. Muranaka. Upon the expiration of that lease in 1969, Kawano and Okada continued to lease on a year-to-year basis until the theater's closure in 1979.⁴

The real property (Tax Map Key 5-3-02:92) at the time of construction was owned by Molokai Ranch, Limited (originally incorporated as the American Sugar Company).

1976 Deed, Doc. 798571, recorded December 29, 1976.
Molokai Ranch, Ltd. to Cooke Land Co, Inc.

1977 Agreement of Sale, Doc. 850606, recorded December 15, 1977. Cooke Land Co., Inc. to John S. Smith, Michael A. Givens and Wadlow J.M. Jones.

1987 Deed, Doc. 1495781, recorded December 17, 1987.
Same parties as above.

1987 Deed, Doc. 1495782, recorded December 17, 1987.
Smith, Givens and Jones to George and Janet King.

4. Builder/Contractor: James Muranaka contracted with George Yamayoshi of Maui to construct the building. The construction materials were reportedly shipped by Mr. Yamayoshi from Maui, but the ultimate suppliers of the materials is unknown.⁵

5. Original plans and construction: There is no known information regarding the existence of original floor plans, elevations, or construction specifications. The original cost of the building, according to an April 8, 1939 article in the Maui News, was \$10,000.⁶

6. Alterations and additions: The building has received no additions. It has, however, had two minor alterations: one each to the exterior and the interior. The exterior alteration consists of the removal of the front entry door to the commercial space in the west side of the building. The three-foot wide door opening (identical to the existing door opening of the east side commercial space) was replaced by a wooden sash window. The window is of the same vertical dimension as the adjacent original window. Although the date of the alteration cannot be ascertained, a 1948 photograph of the building indicates the door in place and a photograph from the early-1970s indicates the present condition.

The interior alteration consists of the removal of a wall in the commercial space of the east side. Physical evidence, consisting of a partially removed concrete foundation wall, indicates that an interior wall divided the commercial space from a room that was a theater office. This change probably occurred after the theater ceased operation and in conjunction with the opening of a flower shop in the early 1980s.

B. Historical Context

The fifth largest of the Hawaiian Islands, Molokai is located between the islands of Oahu and Maui. In the mid-1860s King Kamehameha V acquired large tracts of land from resident Hawaiians and established Molokai as his vacation retreat. Also during his reign, in 1866, the isolated Makenalua Peninsula became the home of the Kalaupapa leper colony. Unfortunately, this led to Molokai being labeled "the leper isle." After his death, the Kamehameha property passed to Charles R. Bishop. In 1897, Bishop's central and western Molokai holdings of 70,000 acres were purchased by a group that would form the Molokai Ranch. With over 100,000 acres under ownership and lease, the American Sugar Company was formed and Molokai was envisioned as becoming home of one of the world's great sugar plantations. A wharf was constructed at Kaunakakai to supply the operation. Lack of adequate water supply, however, laid waste to the dream of a sugar empire before it had hardly begun. Honey production (Molokai was once one of the largest producers in the world) and cattle replaced sugar

production. By 1920 pineapples had been introduced to Molokai. The California Packing Company (later called Del Monte) and Libby, McNeil and Libby, on leased lands, established Molokai's pineapple industry. The pineapple production, coupled with the setting aside of homestead lots by the Hawaiian Homes Commission, led to a relative boom on Molokai.

U.S. census data for the Territory of Hawaii indicated a nearly stable population on Molokai from 1910 to 1920, with populations of 1,791 and 1,784, respectively. In 1930 the population reached 5,032; it increased to 5,354 in 1940 after which it declined slightly through 1970 (all figures include Kalawao district or leper colony). The 1940 census, in which ethnic groups were identified, counted 2,373 Hawaiians/part Hawaiians, slightly less than half of Molokai's population. The Filipinos and Japanese comprised the next largest groups with populations of 1,284 and 1,216, respectively. Caucasians and Chinese numbered 264 and 138, respectively. Although the population did not change substantially in the 1950 census, the mix changed slightly as the numbers of Hawaiians, Caucasians, and Filipinos increased, and the Chinese and Japanese population decreased.

The boom that took place between 1920 and 1940 resulted in a shift of population from the east end of Molokai to the western section. According to Judd, by 1935 74% of the population had shifted to the western areas of Molokai in contrast to 1853 when more than 96% of the population lived east of Kamalo or in the windward valleys. Hoolehua, Kaunakakai, Kualapuu, and Maunaloa villages, which did not have populations indicated in the 1930 census, became the centers of activity. In the 1940 census, Hoolehua village had a population of 1,050; the village of Kaunakakai, 722; Kualapuu village, 641; Pukoo village, 52; and Maunaloa village, 979. (Note: no other towns or villages were listed in the census data.)

With the island's best harbor, Kaunakakai became the shipping center for pineapple, other exports, and goods imported to the island. Kaunakakai also became the island's business and administrative center. The villages of Maunaloa and Kualapuu were the headquarters for the two pineapple producers of Molokai: Libby, McNeil & Libby, and the California Packing Company (Del Monte), respectively.

The centers of activity on Molokai, Kaunakakai, and the plantation centers of Maunaloa and Kualapuu were also

the sites of the island's movie theaters. Prior to the establishment of actual theaters, however, movies were shown by a roving projectionist. Matajiro Takata, would carry his hand-crank projector and Kohler generator in his Studebaker car to the various villages on Molokai. According to his son, Mr. Takata began his circuit, which included Hoolehua, Maunaloa, Kualapuu and Pokoo, in the 1920s. Canvas served as the screen for the flickering black and white images emanating from the carbon-arc projector. The silent movies were shown in community halls, or outdoors if no suitable buildings were available.

Takata, who lived in Kaunakakai, may have shown the movie described by Sophie Cooke in Sincerely Sophie as the first movie show on Molokai.

I well remember the first movie ever shown on Molokai, in the old Cooke Hall at Kaunakakai. Everyone was facinated watching the movie man set up the projector. Suddenly, the picture appeared on the screen which no one had noticed on the other end of the hall. A yell went up when it was discovered, and everyone had to get up and turn himself around to view the movie.

Apparently the population boom of the 1920s and 1930s set the stage for Molokai's first movie theater; first listed in the 1934 Polk's Directory under the proprietorship of Charles E. Morris. Located near the wharf in Kaunakakai, the open air theater was unnamed until 1937 when it was listed as the Kukui Theater. In 1936, Polk's Directory listed for the first time the Takata Theater, also in Kaunakakai. The Takata Theater was a garage in which benches had been set up on the flat floor (present site of Kaunakakai Sales and Service). The 1937 Polk listing also included the Molokai Theater in Kaunakakai, which was managed by Morris. Interviews, however, indicate that the Molokai Theater was actually located in Kualapuu.¹⁰ (Note: The Polk's Directory lists the Molokai as managed by C.E. Morris, Kaunakakai post office; suggesting that Morris, not the theater, was in Kaunakakai.)

Although no one interviewed had clear recollections of the original Kukui Theater, several recalled the Takata Theater. They remembered sitting on wooden benches and watching silent Japanese movies while a man stood to the side and provided the voices for the characters on the screen as well as the sound effects.¹⁰ The Takata Theater operated until February, 1939 when a fire in the

projection room destroyed the equipment, and resulted in its closure. The Maui News reported the event in an article of February 15, 1939.

FIRE ROUTS AUDIENCE FROM MOLOKAI THEATER

KAUNAKAKAI, Molokai, Feb. 12 -- Kaunakakai was in a turmoil tonight when fire broke out in the operating room of the Kaunakakai theater at 8:40 p.m. The capacity audience became panic struck, but luckily the police was quickly on hand to conduct orderly exit.

The 50 gallon fire extinguisher, the sole means of fire protection furnished the town and island by Maui County, was rendered next to useless when it failed to put out the fire. Every available extinguisher, privately owned, was put to use. Molokai Ranch's 50-gallon extinguisher was claimed to be more effective and forceful.

But still the fire was not fully out. The garage water hose was put to use, but the water pressure was too weak. The deputy ordered a bucket brigade formed, which finally succeeded in putting the last spark out.

Deputy Sheriff Charles R. Lindsey was right on the job, being the first to be on hand. He was just proceeding to his office, which is directly opposite the theater when he turned and noticed the blaze. He quickly ordered the Molokai Electric Co. to turn off the current. Then he proceeded to direct the crowd and line.

The whole equipment in the operating room was damaged. The room was lined with asbestos, but the fire escaped through the cracks and quickly spread into the outer wooden wall.¹²

The 1939 Polk's Directory listed four theaters on Molokai: the Kukui, Molokai, Kamoi and Maunaloa. The Takata Theater had been closed by time the directory was published. First listed in 1939, the Maunaloa Theater was in Maunaloa, the Libby, McNeil & Libby pineapple camp. A.K. and J.H. Magoon were the owners and J.F. Ogawa was the manager. Built as a theater to provide entertainment for the pineapple workers, the Maunaloa was built of wood with a slightly inclined floor.¹³ According to an advertisement extending "best wishes and success" to the 5th Molokai Fair, the Maunaloa was equipped with "Up-to-Date Simplex Projectors and Modern RCA Sound System."¹⁴ The Molokai Theater at Kualapuu was essentially of the same configuration and was built to entertain the workers at the California Packing Co.

pineapple plantation. Although not listed in Polk's Directory, another movie house is reported to have staged a short-lived run in Kaunakakai during 1939. Operating in a stable next to Misake's Store, Otto Kahinu showed movies in the period between the closure of the Takata and the opening of the Kamoi theaters. Sound, although never quite in sync with the action on the screen, was provided by a record player.¹⁵

By the time the Kamoi Theater was first described in a April 8, 1939 Maui News article, its construction had already begun. Although without name at the date of the article, the location described in the article indicates the new show house to be the Kamoi.

MOLOKAI GETS NEW SHOW HOUSE

Construction of a new \$10,000 theater in Kaunakakai, Molokai was revealed today by James Muranaka, proprietor of the theater, and George Yamayoshi, contractor on the job, who are on Maui making final arrangements for the opening of the new theater.

The new theater, as yet unnamed, will replace Mr. Muranaka's old theater which was damaged when a fire swept the projection room last February.

The new structure, modern in every detail, is George P. Cooke's property on the Ala Malama Drive, between the Molokai Community Center headquarters and the Mid Nite Inn.

Seating accommodations are being provided for 500 spectators. The latest type seats are being installed, while the newest type projector and talking equipment has been ordered. The house will feature Royal Amusement Co. pictures.

Actual construction was started on March 15. The grand opening is slated to May 1, according to Mr. Muranaka.¹⁶

Although the article referenced the projection room fire as having occurred in Mr. Muranaka's Kaunakakai theater, the fire was actually in the Takata Theater. Francis Takata, Matajiro's son, recalls that Mr. Muranaka may have been leasing the Takata Theater at the time of the fire.¹⁷

Apparently there was some delay in the opening of the Kamoi, since the grand opening was not reported in the Maui News until August 5, 1939.

NEW ROAD IS FETED

KAUNAKAKAI, MOLOKAI, Aug. 4--Completion of the new Manawainui road and the new Kamoi Theater at Kaunakakai was celebrated with free movies and entertainment at the theater July 25.¹⁸

Sometime between the start of construction and its grand opening, the Kamoi received its name. Ka Moi, as the theater was listed in the Polk's Directory, means "the king." The theater's painted sign depicts, as well as the letters KAMOI, a Hawaiian warrior, possibly King Kamehameha. According to local sources, the name of the theater originated from a "name the theater" contest. James Lewis, postmaster at the time, won a \$25 prize by selecting the name Ka Moi.¹⁹ Since the Royal Amusement Co. would be providing the movies, what better name for the new theater than "the king."

The new theater also had two commercial enterprises which occupied the front spaces on either side of the entry. On the east side was a barber shop and on the west side was a concession/snack bar operated by Mayo Kikukowa. Open only during show times, the concession offered shaved ice, soft drinks, ice cream, candies, and seeds to moviegoers.²⁰ (Note: After the theater closed, the Kuu Aloha flower shop occupied the barber shop and former theater office until about 1985. The concession was operated as Rabang's Restaurant two to three years prior to the theater's closing until about 1985.)

Immediately following the opening of the Kamoi, the former Takata Theater was converted to a skating rink. A new form of entertainment had come to Kaunakakai. Reported in the Mauai News of August 9, 1939, the opening of the new endeavor was eagerly anticipated.

SKATING RINK TO OPEN SATURDAY; OLDSTERS LIKE IT

KAUNAKAKAI, Aug. 6 -- Molokai youngsters and many grown ups are just as crazy about skating as those in Honolulu. The two short sidewalks at Ala Malama and the Kaunakakai wharf are filled with skaters desperately trying to learn well enough for the opening of the new skating rink at Kaunakakai.

Francis Takata, manager of Kaunakakai Auto Supply, is renovating the old Kaunakakai theater into a skating rink. He expects to open Saturday. The rink will be 60 X 30 feet and will be equipped with sanitary conveniences, box office and large windows.²¹

Residents of the Kaunakakai area now had a choice of two theaters: they could sit under the open, Hawaiian sky in the Kukui or experience the new, modern Kamoi. It seemed that both had an adequate number of patrons who would select their theater for the evening based upon the particular movie being shown. The Kamoi was showing Royal Amusement Co. films while those at the Kukui were provided by Consolidated Amusement Co. According to Robert Kawano, owner of the Kamoi from 1945 until its closure, both theaters featured similar movies; second-run films could be ordered from a standard listing and first-run films would be provided by Royal after they had shown in Honolulu and the islands of Hawaii and Maui. Several months might elapse before a major movie first shown in Honolulu would finally reach Kaunakakai. The time lag would generally depend on the movie's popularity and its length-of-run in the larger cities. In addition to the feature, cartoons, newsreels, and serials were included in the entertainment package.

The first newspaper advertisements for movies on Molokai were carried in the Maui News on August 16, 1939 soon after the opening of the Kamoi. A section headed "At Molokai Theaters" provided a short description of the movies listed in the ad block for the Molokai and Kukui theaters. Playing at the Kukui on Thursday was "The Beachcomber" with Charles Laughton ("one of the years ten best"); Saturday, "Topper Takes a Trip"; Sunday, "The Story of Alexander Graham Bell"; Monday, "Return of the Cisco Kid" (with "Mayor" Warner Baxter); and Wednesday, "Pirates of the Sky" and "Law West of the Tombstones." The same movies were shown at the Molokai in Kaulapuu, but on different nights.

To digress momentarily, the "Mayor" Warner Baxter who portrayed the Cisco Kid had been, according to an April, 1936 article in Paradise of the Pacific, "...with a great luau and other ceremonies of jubilation, elected Mayor of Molokai; hero of the popular song: "The Cock-eyed Mayor of Kaunakakai."²²

Thus, the first movie ads for Molokai were run by C.E. Morris or by Consolidated, his distributor. Although it could not be verified, it is probable that Morris ran his ads, particularly for the Kukui, in response to the competition introduced by the Kamoi. The Kamoi, incidentally, did not advertise by newspaper but only by local billboards. (Note: After the Kukui reopened in the 1950s, no ads for either theater were run in the Maui News.)

At the outbreak of World War II, the Maunaloa, Molokai, Kukui, and Kamoi theaters were all in operation. Since there is a gap in Polk's Directory from 1942 to 1953, the exact dates of the closures of the Molokai and Kukui theaters cannot be determined by available evidence. Robert Kawano recalls that these theaters closed around 1950 with the death of C.E. Morris. Others, however, recall that the Kukui Theater closed during the war because it was open air and succumbed to blackout restrictions. An illuminated movie screen near the wharf was apparently not felt in the best interest of Kaunakakai's wartime safety.

The Kamoi played a new role during the War. Although its screen remained illuminated through the War, the clientele was different. The U.S. Army, with camps north of Kaunakakai, leased the theater for its troops. Locals could attend as guests of the military personnel. The theater was used in this capacity until 1944 or 1945 and then returned to its regular programming.

The end of the war also brought changes to the ownership of the Kamoi Theater. Robert Kawano and Hatsuchi Okada, both of Kaunakakai, purchased the remainder of James Muranaka's thirty-year lease for \$2,500.²³ They paid monthly lease payments to the Molokai Ranch which owned the land. Kawano and Okada continued to operate the Kamoi until its closure in May, 1979.

In 1954, the first Polk's Directory since the beginning of WWII listed only two theaters on Molokai; the Kamoi and the Maunaloa. The Maunaloa had operated through the war, but in 1954 was without a manager. Sometime between 1954 and 1957, Robert Kawano took over its operation until turning it over to Kenneth Tsukano in 1960. In 1968 Mrs. Irene Tsukano operated the theater; she remained until its 1977 closure.

The year 1954 introduced some new forms of entertainment to Kaunakakai. Arthur Kikukowa of the Mid Nite Inn opened the island's first bowling alley. A year or so later, the Kanemitsu²⁴ Bakery followed the trend and installed four lanes. Apparently, there was not enough patronage for two alleys and by 1958 both closed. Also in 1954, the Maui News began advertising television sets and, in 1956, listing television program guides. Television began its slow infiltration of Molokai, but as in the case of the movies and other trends, Honolulu and the islands of Hawaii and Maui stood first in line.

Television apparently did not have an immediate impact on the movies as a form of entertainment on Molokai. The 1962 Polk's Directory listed two new theaters on the island: the Kualapuu, in Kualapuu (probably the former Molokai Theater) and the Kukui, in Kaunakakai. John Barr came to Molokai to run both theaters. Consolidated Amusement provided the films. The Kukui had moved from its original location by the wharf to the upland side of Kaunakakai on the corner of Kukui Place and Ing Road. As had been the original Kukui, the new Kukui Theater was open to the sky. Wooden walls, a gravel floor, hard wooden benches, and a wooden building to house the projection room comprised the Kukui.

The Kualapuu Theater was the first of the four remaining Molokai theaters to close; it survived until 1974. Mrs. Molly Tengan took over its operation in 1966 and remained until 1971; after that date no manager was listed. The Kukui lasted until 1976; Cath and Herbert Takase replaced John Barr in 1966 and managed the theater until its closure. A year after the closure of the Kukui, the Maunaloa ended its thirty-eight years of providing entertainment to the residents of Maunaloa. Finally, in May of 1979, Robert Kawano closed the doors of the Kamoi Theater; Molokai had seen its last picture show.

For some the closing of the Kamoi Theater was barely noticed, but for others the movies provided more than images on the silver screen. Although television and the comfort of being entertained at home had captured a segment of the audience, the young missed the opportunity offered by the Kamoi to leave the house and socialize with friends. Indeed, it seems that in the end the Kamoi had become the playground of the young which, in turn, detracted from the enjoyment of the older audience. Screaming kids, soda bottles rolling down the aisles, and "Mary Poppins" remain the last images of the Kamoi in the minds of some people.

On the other hand, the younger generation enjoyed the kung fu and samurai movies as their parents had enjoyed cowboys and Indians, King Kong, and Tarzan. A young imitator in the front row, spontaneously dancing and mouthing the sounds of Elvis Presley, stood in for the voice and sound effects man of the silent Japanese movies of the Takata Theater. Young boys, after an evening Boy Scout meeting, would catch a glimpse of a movie through a hole beneath the theater floor; one, perhaps, that their parents had forbidden.

The Kamoi, as had the theaters in Maunaloa and Kualapuu, provided a space for other forms of community activity. In Maunaloa, for example, the March 6, 1940 issue of the Maui News reported plans for an amateur program to be put on by the school. Hula numbers, instrumental and vocal music, and Japanese dancing would be provided by members of the community. The program would be followed by the regular movie. The Kamoi Theater was used by the Japanese community for annual cultural events, including stage shows, and after WWII was rented by the Japanese temple to show Japanese language movies. Intended as a fund raising activity, the movies were initially shown weekly, then less frequently, and finally lack of interest resulted in their discontinuation.²⁵ The Kaunakakai School would also periodically rent the theater to show educational films.

According to those interviewed, both the Kamoi and the Kukui theaters had a mixed patronage and were attended by all the cultural groups on the island. Although some indicated that the Kukui was preferred because the films offered by the Consolidated Amusement Co. were more popular, people would attend the theater showing the best movie on a given evening. It seemed that both theaters attempted to attract as wide an audience as possible. The programs would be varied: action movies to attract the young and working people; National Geographic films for the family; ethnic films, such as the Japanese films discussed above, for specific groups. This was particularly true in the later years when those who had television, particularly the older and more well-to-do, remained at home. Only when a special movie was shown, one that would not be shown next week on television, would they attend the theaters.

NOTES - HISTORICAL INFORMATION

¹ "Molokai Gets New Show House," Maui News (Wailuku), 8 April 1939, p. 6, col. 2.

² "New Road Is Feted," Maui News, 5 August 1939, Molokai Section, p.1, col. 2.

³ "Molokai Gets New Show House," Maui News.

⁴ Personal interview with Robert Kawano, 25 March 1988.

⁵ Kawano.

⁶ "Molokai Gets New Show House," Maui News.

⁷ Gerrit P. Judd IV, "The Story of Molokai: Puleoo," Islander, June 1940, p.29.

⁸ Telephone interview with Mr. Francis Takata, 15 April, 1988.

⁹ Spencer Mason Architects [Honolulu], "Kamoi Theater, Kaunakakai, Molokai, Hawaii, 11 February 1988, citing Sophie Judd Cooke, Sincerely Sophie (Honolulu: Tongg Publishing Co., Ltd., 1964).

¹⁰ Takata.

¹¹ Personal interview with Arthur Kikukowa, 26 March 1988, Kawano, and Takata.

¹² Helen Wiebke, "Fire Routs Audience From Molokai Theater," Maui News, 15 February 1939, p. 1, col. 1.

¹³ Personal interview with Robert Arakawa, 26 March 1988.

¹⁴ "Maunaloa Theater," Maui News, 30 March 1940, p. 6, cols. 5-6.

¹⁵ Kawano.

¹⁶ "Molokai Gets New Show House," Maui News.

¹⁷ Takata.

¹⁸ "New Road Is Feted," Maui News.

¹⁹ Personal interview with Wilfred Imamura, 26 March 1988.

²⁰ Personal interview with Mr. and Mrs. Richard Sakata and Mary Van Gils, 25 March 1988, and Kawano.

²¹ "Skating Rink To Open Saturday," Maui News, 9 August 1939, p. 2, col. 2.

²² Earl M. Thacker, "Molokai; The Friendly Isle," Paradise of the Pacific, April 1936, pp. 21-22.

²³ Kawano.

²⁴ Kikukowa.

²⁵ Imamura.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The simple two-story vernacular building, although not ornate or impressive in appearance, offers an unusually well-conceived design solution for its particular site. On a flat site, the foundation makes use of wood posts on concrete footings to provide adequate floor slope for good line of sight as well as space beneath the upper portion of the auditorium for commercial spaces and restrooms.

The use of materials and method of construction was standard for Molokai in its period of construction.

2. Condition of fabric: The building, having been vacant, not maintained, and vandalized over a period of several years, is in poor condition. All building components, including the roof, exterior walls, foundations, structural members, and utilities' show some degree of deterioration.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Two stories in height and rectangular in shape, the building has a width of 48 feet and length of 86 feet.

The front facade is symmetrical, with the first story, beneath a projecting marquee, divided into three bays: a recessed central entry bay flanked on either side by commercial fronts of equal size (Photo No. 3). The entry bay, recessed approximately 12 feet from the front, is defined by slightly projecting square pilasters on the front corners and a slightly curved "beam" which suggests the proscenium "arch" shape of the interior stage opening (Photo No. 9).

2. Foundations: Two types of foundations are used to support the structure. The at-grade front 30 feet rests on a concrete slab. This area includes the entry vestibule, commercial spaces, and restrooms. The exterior and interior walls rest on low concrete foundation walls which rise 6 inches from the floor slab. The rear 56 feet is above grade and supported by 4" X 4" posts which rest on T-shaped concrete footings. The lower portion of the footings is 16 inches square and 6 to 8 inches thick. The vertical extension is 5-3/4 inches square and the heights vary. Approximately 50 percent of these footings are deteriorated beyond repair.

3. Walls: The front facade and the front 12 feet of the side facades consist of a plaster coating over wood boards. The plaster walls are painted white except for the following which are painted dark brown: the arch and pilasters of the entry; the area beneath the sill line of the front; and the area beneath the ticket window sill line in the recessed entry bay. White-painted poster boards with brown-painted wood frames flank the outside of, and are mounted on the interior walls of the recessed entry bay (Photo No. 9). One final detailing element is a kite-shaped wood panel topped by three diamond-shaped vents which are set just below the gable ridge.

The side walls consist of the above-mentioned plaster-clad front portion and vertically-aligned 1" X 6" wood board siding (Photo Nos. 4, 5 and 7). In a single layer, and attached directly to the wooden frame, the flush-joint tongue and boards are painted white. The bottom ends of the siding are without trim and follow the slope of the floor. Beneath the raised, above-grade portion of the floor, green-painted 1" X 4" horizontal wooden boards are used for skirting (portions have been removed). The siding extends up to the eave overhang in the rear portion (corresponding to the interior stage area) and to a 60-foot long horizontal band of ventilation openings between the rear and the front plastered portion. The ventilation openings (2'-3" in height) consist of a double layer of spaced 1" X 6" wood shiplap siding with exterior screens. Between the eaves and the ventilation openings is a horizontal 1" x 12" wooden board which extends along the entire side. Spaced between the exposed rafters are narrow, horizontal openings (approximately 4" X 5') which are used for ventilation.

The rear facade consists of the same type of vertical board siding as the side facades (Photo No. 6). Beneath the gable ridge is a rectangular frame defined by 1" X 6" boards (function unknown and no opening is apparent). A 2-inch-wide wood strip extends horizontally across the facade about 12 inches below the juncture of the eaves and the side walls. Centered in the wall between the 2-inch strip and the bottom is a partially boarded-up opening. Corresponding to the location of the theater's speaker unit, the opening may have had a function with the original wall-mounted speaker. Horizontal skirting, identical to the sides, is also used for the open area beneath the floor.

4. Structural systems, framing: As discussed, the

front 30 feet of the building rests on a flat concrete slab with 6-inch high foundation walls. The remainder, which includes the above-grade theater and stage floors, is supported by 4" X 4" and 4" X 6" wooden posts resting on T-shaped concrete footings (Photo No. 8). The posts support 4" X 8" floor beams which are spaced 10'-1" apart and span 8'-1" on center. The posts are tied to the beams and floor joists by 2" X 4" knee braces (four on interior posts and two for perimeter posts). The 2" X 8" joists are spaced 20 inches on center.

The wall framing consists of 2" X 4" and 4" X 4" wood studs. The 4" X 4" members extend from the perimeter footings to the roof trusses. Spacing varies, but is generally every 5 feet. Horizontal 2" X 4" framing members are placed between the vertical members for support and exterior siding attachment. (The exposed framing is shown in the interior photographs, Nos. 11 and 12.) Let-in bracing consisting of 2" X 4" boards is used for corner support.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: There are two door openings in the front facade: a double door in the main theater entry and a single door in the commercial space to its east. (The west commercial space originally had a door opening which has been removed.) The boarded-up theater doors are five-panel wood while the door in the commercial space is flat wood. Framing consists of simple headers and jambs.

Each of the side facades contain three door openings; one in the commercial space and two in the auditorium. The door of the east commercial space is five-panel wood while that of the west commercial space was two-part folding (removed). Both are framed with simple headers and jambs. The auditorium door openings are four feet in width and functioned as exits. Although they have been removed, the original double doors were five-panel wood with crash bars. All are framed with 6-inch-wide boards. The original wooden exit stairs have been removed.

b. Windows and shutters: The original front facade had the following window openings: one large fixed-sash single-light window in the outside corners of each commercial space; an open ticket window (boarded-up); and one high 12-light window (boarded-up) on each side of the theater entry doors (Photo No. 9). All have simple wooden frames. Sometime after 1948, a fixed single-

light window replaced the original door of the west commercial space.

In the upper portion of the front facade, above the marquee, are several openings that functioned to ventilate the auditorium. In the lower center, behind the Kamoi sign, are three small horizontal openings with metal hoods which were used as air intakes for the projection room. Near each corner are wood-framed, louvered openings (painted green). Beneath the gable ridge are three adjacent diamond-shaped openings that are covered with screens.

The side facades are nearly identical to each other in the configuration of window and ventilation openings. The east commercial space contains two window openings in which the sash has been largely destroyed. They appear to have been double-hung wood sash. To the rear of the commercial space (corresponding to the theater office) is a large double-hung window which is framed with 6-inch-wide boards.

The west side commercial space contains three window openings from which the sash has been removed. Corresponding to the restroom behind the commercial space is a large double-hung window (boarded-up).

Ventilation openings consist of a 60-foot long horizontal band below the eave overhang (previously described); three vertical louvered openings (painted green); and four horizontal openings (three on the west side). The horizontal openings are screened and originally had shutters that opened to the interior. There are also single vertical openings at each side of the facade that correspond to the side rooms of the stage, but their function is unknown.

6. Roof: The roof is a simple gable shape clad with corrugated metal. The metal roofing is attached directly to 2" X 4" boards spaced approximately 2'-6" apart and without sheathing. Wooden trusses, consisting of 4" X 6" upper and lower chords and 4" X 4" diagonal braces, and with a spacing of approximately 10 feet, provide roof support. The overhanging eaves are without soffits and the underside of the roofing material is exposed. (Note: portions of the roofing in the southeast corner have been removed.)

A slightly sloping wooden marquee, topped by corrugated metal, extends across the entire front facade of the theater. The soffit is plywood and painted white. The

fascia is wood, detailed by two wooden strips.

C. Description of the Interior:

1. Floor plan: The floor plan (sketch attached) provides a somewhat innovative solution to providing a sloped theater floor and at-grade commercial spaces on the street frontage. Thirteen steps provide interior access from the at-grade entry to an aisle providing lateral access within the auditorium. This aisle provides access to the side exits and to the lateral aisles which, in turn, provide access to the projection booth and thirteen tiers of seats above and eight tiers below. The tiers are 5-3/4" high and 2'-6" deep. A second aisle, between the lower row of seats and the stage, provides access to additional side exits.

In the front portion of the building, beneath the rear of the auditorium, is a former concession stand/snack bar and women's restroom on the west side and former barbershop, theater office/ticket booth, and men's restroom on the east side.

2. Stairways: The main stairway to the auditorium is 5'-6" wide with 5-inch-wide side walls/railings on either side. Vertical 1" X 6" tongue and groove boards with a 2" X 5" flush-mounted board railing form the sidewalls. The board stairs consist of 5-3/4" risers and thirteen 16-inch-wide treads. Simple open, wooden stairs (only one remains) span the 3'-6" rise from the lower aisle to the single rooms on each side of the stage. Consisting of inclined 2" X 6" side-boards which support five 1" X 6" treads, the stairs were unadorned and without railings.

3. Flooring: The floors of the commercial spaces, ticket office, and restrooms are concrete.

The auditorium floor, including the aisles, seating tiers, and stage floor, consist of 1" X 6" tongue and groove boards. A fabric runner, approximately 1/4" thick, covers the lateral aisles.

Concrete, poured over wood, comprises the floor of the projection booth.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls of the commercial spaces and restrooms consist of 1" X 6" tongue and groove white-painted boards.

The auditorium walls are unadorned and reveal the fram-

ing members and reverse side of the exterior siding. (Photo Nos. 11 and 12). A grayish-white stain is the only wall coating. The only decorative feature of the auditorium is the framing around the stage opening, which consists of three slightly-spaced wood strips on a black field. The framing suggests a proscenium arch by its bent beam shape. The ceiling is divided into 4' X 10' tan-colored canec or fiberboard panels framed by darker 1" X 3" and 1" X 6" boards. A cluster of four panels in the center and four individual panels near the corners are in an open lattice configuration. (Note: these open lattices, in addition to decoration, provided ventilation. The openings in the upper exterior wall between each of the eave overhangs are above the ceiling plane, suggesting circulation via the ceiling to the sides.)

The projection room is surfaced with white-painted plaster walls and ceiling. A portion of the ceiling and front wall, and all of the east wall have been removed.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: There are four interior door openings in the front section of the building: one each to the concession/snack bar space and the ticket window/ office space and one to each of the restrooms. The doors have been removed, but scattered doors in the building indicate that they were probably five-panel wood doors (hardware removed). Simple wood strips frame each of the remaining door openings.

The entry opening between the interior vestibule and the auditorium was screened by a fabric curtain (removed). White-painted wood strips frame the opening. Over the top is a wider, white-painted door head with the same arch shape of the stage opening.

Four side exit doors, each four feet wide, are at the ends of the exit aisles (boarded up). The openings are framed by 2" X 4" boards. The original doors were apparently five-panel double doors with crash bars.

Four door openings, framed by simple wood surrounds, provide access to the stage. Two open to the auditorium seating area and two open to the side of the stage. None of the doors are in place.

One door opening, similar to those described, provides access to the west side of the projection room at the rear of the auditorium. It is possible that the east

side also had a door opening, but the wall has been removed.

b. Windows: A four-foot wide by three-foot high window opening is located in the wall between the concession space and the interior lobby of the theater (boarded-up). This window was used to sell various snack items to the moviegoers. Simple wood strips frame the opening.

There are no other windows between the interior spaces. Those described under the exterior description have interior framing of simple wood strips.

8. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation. The building had no mechanical equipment for heating and air conditioning. Ventilation was provided by various openings in the exterior walls, most of which are previously described: two vertical louvered openings in the rear of the auditorium (front of building); three vertical louvered openings on each side; a sixty-foot long horizontal band set slightly beneath the eaves; and narrow horizontal openings between the eaves at the top of the exterior walls in conjunction with the latticed openings of the auditorium ceiling.

The projection room was ventilated by three narrow horizontal intake openings near the floor level and by an exhaust vent pipe which rises through the ceiling and out the ridge of the roof.

b. Lighting: The exterior lighting is limited to the incandescent lamps attached to the ceiling of the recessed entry and the underside of the marquee (largely removed) and incandescent lamps over the four side exits. Set in a standard metal shade, the exit lights are extended approximately 18" from the wall by a 1" pipe conduit.

The interior of the commercial spaces, ticket office, restrooms, and interior entry vestibule consisted of simple incandescent ceiling-mounted fixtures (most are removed). Lighting of the auditorium was limited to six brass, chain-suspended, milk-glass globes with incandescent bulbs (four intact). Near the front of the auditorium are three spot lights, mounted on the ceiling and directed toward the stage (not original fixtures). Exit signs were set over each of the four side exits and the main entrance.

c. Plumbing: The restroom fixtures, consisting of sinks, toilets and urinals have been destroyed. No evidence of plumbing fixtures exists in either of the commercial spaces. Since one was originally a barber-shop and the other a concession/snack bar, it is possible that they may have had water supply.

d. Projection and sound equipment: The projection equipment has been removed but consisted of two Simplex sound projectors. The theater's single speaker is set on the rear-center of the stage floor behind the screen. Only the concave frame and tattered remnants of the screen remain.

9. Original furnishings: As evidenced by the remaining interior materials, neither the commercial spaces nor the auditorium were elaborately furnished. Aside from the auditorium's ceiling material, the "decor" consisted of simply painted or stained wood. Several of the original theater seats remain in place, but their condition is poor.

The original sign, centered on the top of the marquee over the front entry, is in relatively good condition. On a sculptural shape, the green-painted sign includes the following detailing: "KAMOI" in white letters along the bottom portion; and an Hawaiian warrior within a white circle in the upper portion.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The Kamoi is on the southeast corner of Ala Malama Avenue and Kamoi Street. The front of the building faces north (Ala Malama Avenue). The west side is along Kamoi Street. A vacant lot, containing several large trees, is to the building's rear; a drug store is to its east. The site is flat and at the same grade as the adjacent lots and fronting streets.

2. Historic landscape design. Other than two trees on the west side, the building site was not landscaped. Original walkways consist of concrete sidewalks along the street frontages and three-foot-wide concrete walks along the sides of the front commercial spaces (approximately twenty feet in length).

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Historical views:

1. Kamoi Theater front facade - 1948 Flood Collection of Dorothe B. Curtis, Molokai, Hawaii.
2. Kamoi Theater front facade - early-1970s Collection of Dorothe B. Curtis, Molokai, Hawaii).

B. Interviews

1. Arakawa, Robert, 26 March 1988, Kaunakakai, local Postmaster and long-time resident of Maunaloa.
2. Egusa, Judy, 25 March 1988, Kaunakakai, native of Molokai and attended movies as a youth in the 1960s.
3. Egusa, Jean, 25 March 1988, Kaunakakai, local business owner.
4. Imamura, Wilfred, 26 March 1988, Kaunakakai, local business owner and long-time resident.
5. Kawano, Robert, 25 March 1988, Kaunakakai, owner of the Kamoi Theater from 1945 - 1979.
6. Kikukowa, Arthur, 26 March 1988, Kaunakakai, long-time resident and owner of the Mid-Nite Inn (across from the Kamoi).
7. Kikukowa, Philip, 26 March 1988, Kaunakakai, native of Molokai and attended movies as a youth in the 1960s.
8. Sakata, Richard, 25 March 1988, Kaunakakai, long-time resident and former owner of Molokai Drugs (adjacent to Kamoi).
9. Takata, Francis, 15 April 1988, telephone interview, son of Matajiro Takata, owner of Takata Theater, and long-time local business owner.
10. Van Gils, Mary, 25 March 1988, Kaunakakai, long-time resident of Molokai.
11. von Tempisky, Helen, 7 April 1988, telephone interview, resident of Molokai since 1953.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Honolulu. Spencer Mason Architects. "Evaluation of the Kamoi Theater and Other Historic Resources in Kaunakakai, Molokai." 13 November 1987.

Honolulu. Spencer Mason Architects. "Kamoi Theater, Kaunakakai, Molokai." 11 February 1988.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Altonn, Helen. "Kaunakakai - Slow and Easy." Honolulu Star-Bulletin, 19 November 1978, p. C-1, col. 8.

Judd, Henry P. "Molokai Revisited." The Friend (Honolulu), September 1933, pp. 184-187.

Judd IV, Gerrit P. "The Story of Molokai: Puleoo." Islander (Honolulu), June 1940, pp. 9, 18, 29, 31.

Maui News (Wailuki), general search, specific dates included in End Notes.

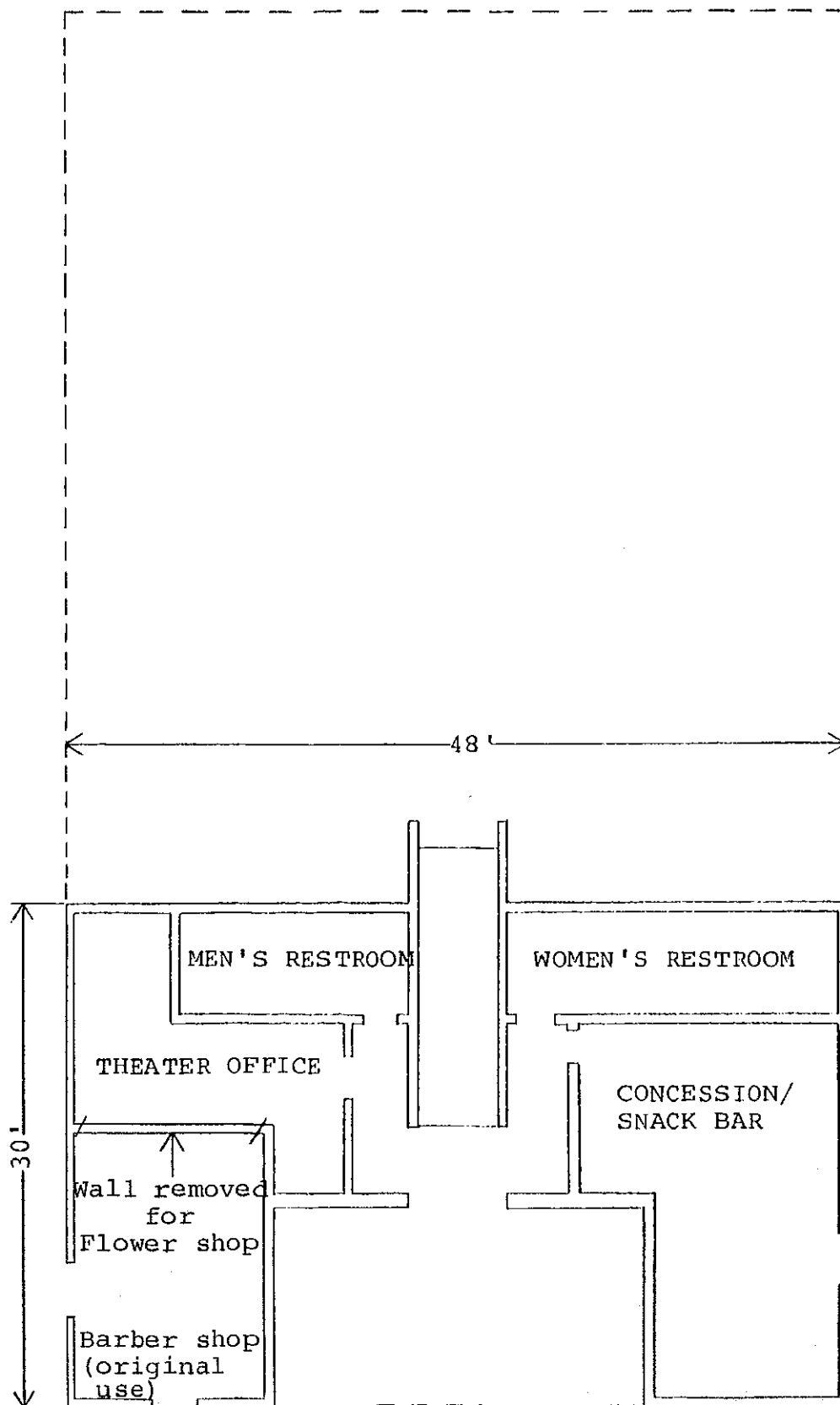
Polk's Directory of the Island's of Hawaii, Maui, and Kauai, Including Lina'i and Molokai. Honolulu: R.L. Polk & Co., 1930-1980 (excluding years 1942-1953, 1955-56, 1958-59, 1961, and 1963 which were not published).

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This documentation has been undertaken as a mitigative recording in accordance with a Memorandum of Agreement between the United States Postal Service and Hawaii State Historic Preservation Officer dated and signed by representatives of both parties on March 7, 1988 and March 8, 1988, respectively.

Prepared by:

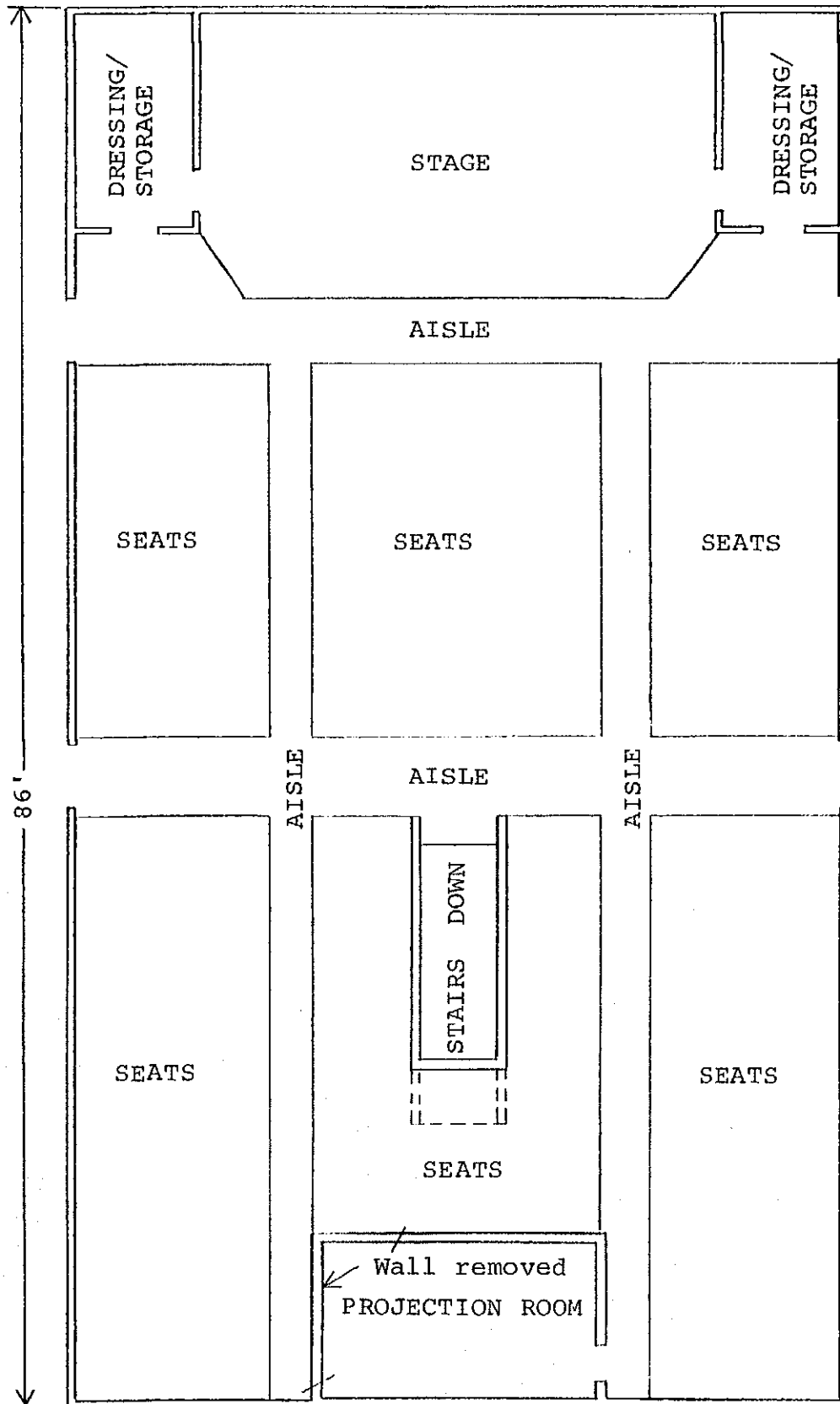
H.J. "Jim" Kolva
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April 18, 1988



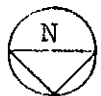
KAMOI THEATER -- GROUND FLOOR



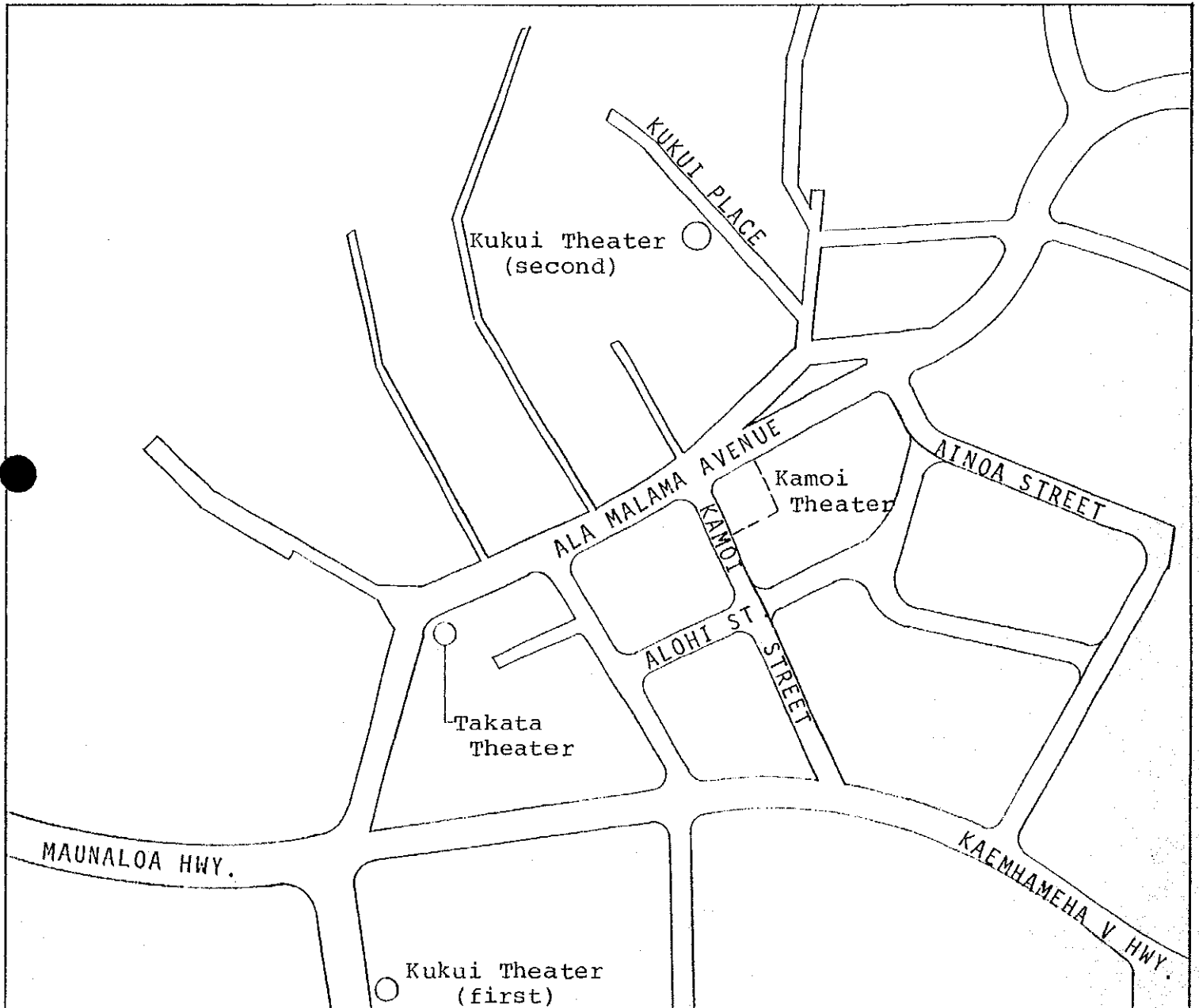
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KAMOI THEATER -- AUDITORIUM



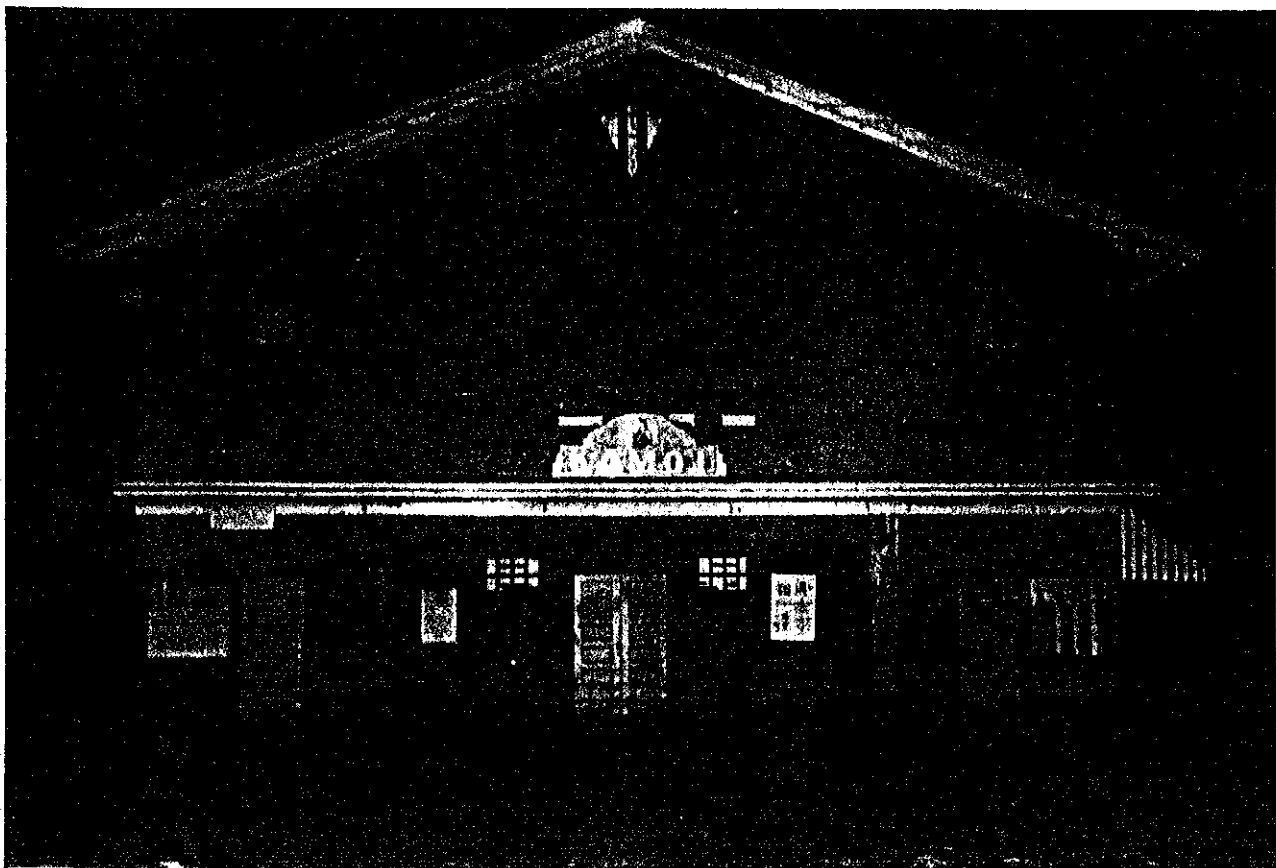
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KAUNAKAKAI

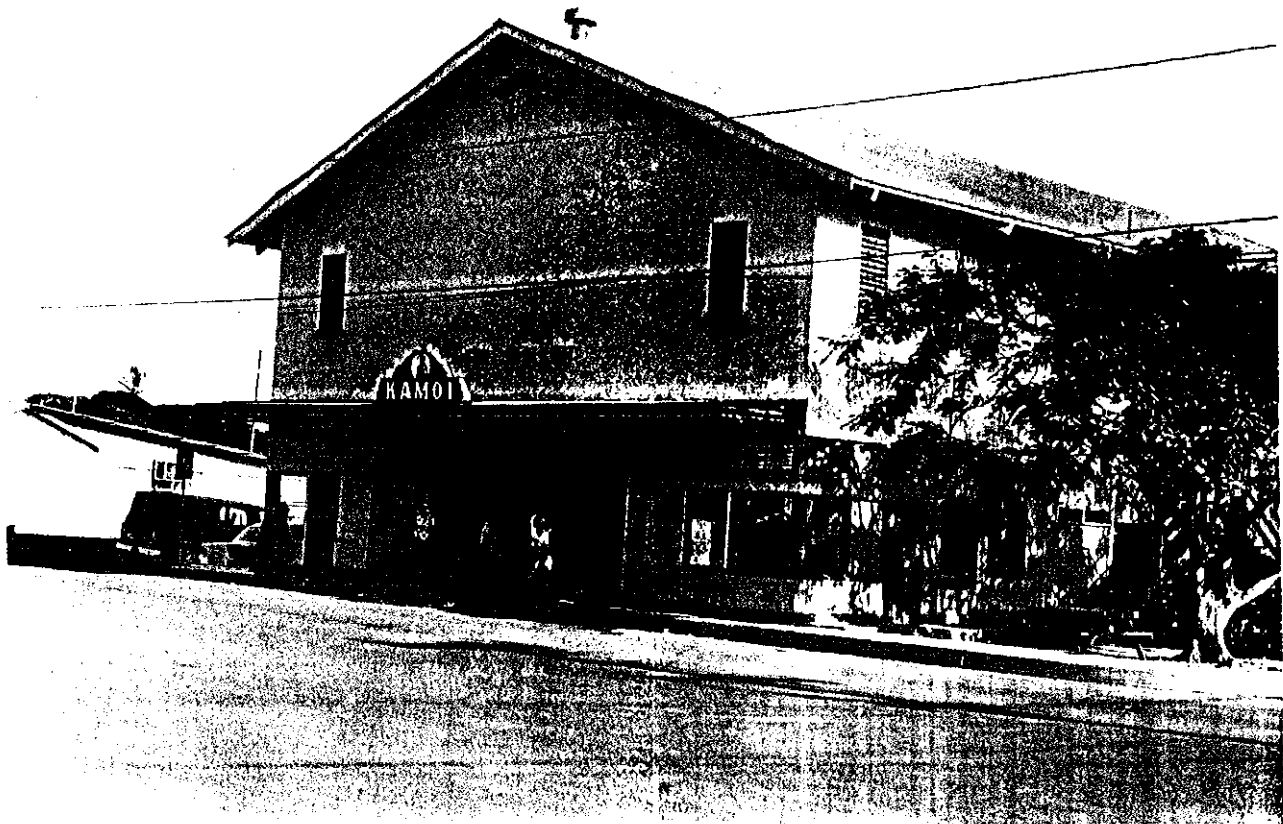


1" = 350'



KAMOI THEATER, 1948
Kaunakakai, Moloka'i

From the collection of Dorothe B. Curtis, Moloka'i Museum and Cultural
Center, Moloka'i, Hawaii



KAMOI THEATER, 1970
Kaunakakai, Moloka'i

From the collection of Dorothe B. Curtis, Moloka'i Museum and Cultural
Center, Molokai, Hawaii